

A Naning Recital.

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When stationed at Alor Gajah in 1908, I heard an old Malay, named Ungkai Lisut, recite at a wedding-feast a pleasant speech of Menangkabau customary sayings. He afterwards repeated the recital for my benefit (it was printed, with a translation, in Number 72 of this Journal), and some time later gave me the tattered manuscript of a longer and 'deeper' speech—the text now published. The restoration of the manuscript has been a difficult task: Ungkai Lisut's memory of the sayings proved, in fact, more accurate than his document; and the present version contains several passages that came back to his mind (after a special discipline of prayer and fasting) during a visit he paid me at Singapore in the year 1914.

An explanation of all the references in the recital would fill a small volume, but a few words will make it intelligible.

Naning, now included in the Settlement of Malacca, was formerly one of the Nine States—the original *Negri Sembilan*—founded by Sumatran immigrants, who crossed the Straits of Malacca in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and brought with them the Menangkabau Custom (*Adat Menangkabau*) of exogamous tribes, descent of property through females, and mild criminal procedure of compromise and reparation. Naning came under Portuguese influence, and afterwards (by treaty made in 1643) paid nominal tribute to the Dutch conquerors of Malacca; but remained in effect an autonomous and semi-democratic State, with a constitution of Chief (the Dato' Naning), Heads of Tribes, and Elders of Clans.

After the East India Company had replaced the Dutch, attempts to levy a full tribute led to the Naning War of 1831-1832: Dol Said, the Dato' Naning, made a stubborn resistance to the Indian troops, but finally succumbed; the tribal constitution was abolished (even the use of 'the terms *Dattoo* and *Sookoo*' was forbidden); and Naning became a Malacca 'District', divided into Mukims under territorial Penghulus.

In spite of political annihilation and the steady pressure of Colonial Courts and Law, the tribal Custom still survives with remarkable vitality in all matters affecting property, marriage and inheritance. The survival is due partly to the neighbourhood of Rembau, where the fuller *Adat* still survives; but it must also be

attributed in part to the natural fitness of the Custom for regulating the life of a peasant community of exogamous clans. Changed economic conditions are weakening its hold (ten years of the rubber industry, for example, have already left their mark); but it is the union of ancient customary law with a lenient British rule that has given the Naning peasantry so comfortable a lot with so few regrets for the past. When the Attorney General⁽¹⁾ referred to them a few years ago in the Legislative Council of the Colony, he quoted the famous lines:

*O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agrícolas!*

This speech (or, rather, poem) is intended for recital by the Elder of a Clan at the formal ceremony of marriage, when the bridegroom, his clansman, comes in torchlight procession to the bride's house for payment of the bride-price. The escort, armed with spear and kris, and waging a realistic sham fight with the retainers of the bride, forces its way slowly through the crowded *kampung*, with charges, retreats and rallies; the torch-lit space under the coconut palms is filled with the swaying crowd of fighters; drums, fifes, guns, gongs and Chinese crackers make a continuous din; and the *sorak* war-cry or the shrill voices of the *dzikir*-singers round the bridegroom rise at intervals above the general tumult. At length the steps of the house are reached, a fee is paid to open the cord across the entrance, and the bridegroom, dressed in silks and loaded with armlets and anklets, is led up into the house by his friends. The Elder of the bride's clan is seated with his clansmen at the far end of the brightly lit verandah, and to him the speaker addresses the recital, pausing and raising his hands together in salutation (*sěmbah*) at each recurrence of the words 'Homage, O Chief!'.

Ungkai Lisut informed me that these recitals are less regarded now than when he was young—wedding guests are more impatient for the arrival of curry and rice—and that he had recited the full speech only on two occasions. The first was the wedding of the daughter of Kathi Ahmad—a man of great note in the Kelemak Mukim in those days; the second, a marriage at Jelatang. On this latter occasion a 'very clever' man from Brisu, famous for his knowledge of customary sayings, was known to have been engaged 'to receive the bride-price' (*měněrima adat*): he would undoubtedly make an oration and put the bridegroom and his people to shame if they could not produce a rival speaker.

In these circumstances, although the bridegroom was not of his own clan, Ungkai Lisut was called on for help and invited 'to pay the bride-price' (*měngisi adat*); he accepted the invitation and delivered this recital. At the end of it the clever man from Brisu sat as discomfited and dumb as the Queen of Sheba

(1). The Hon'ble Mr. J. R. Innes (formerly a District Officer of Alor Gajah), in proposing an amendment of the Malacca Lands Ordinance, designed to secure the Naning Malays in safe enjoyment of their ancestral holdings.

after hearing all the wisdom of Solomon; there was no more spirit in him.

Ungkai Lisut's own account of his triumph was as follows:

"What is this?" I said, 'No answer? Surely a drum should be beaten at both ends, not at one end only? Have I been displaying fine clothes to the blind, showing off a fine voice to the deaf? Am I both to spin the top and peg it as well? If you can go higher, show me the branches: if you can go deeper, show me the roots!'

The Brisu man made a sour face and kept absolutely dumb. When my people saw that he could not give an answer they raised three loud cheers, and then I paid over the bride-price and we went on with the wedding."

The recital falls naturally into three divisions:

First, a prelude, addressed to the Elder of the bride's clan and the wedding guests (lines 1 to 51);

Second, a Song of Origins (*Těromba*), telling the myth of the two Malay Customs (the law of Talion and the law of Reparation) and the coming of Menangkabau immigrants to the Peninsula (lines 52 to 276);

Third, a peroration, telling of the speaker's present purpose—the marriage of his clansman (lines 277 to 330).

It is not easy to find an English parallel to this form of composition, but the 'Song of Origins' recalls at times the tone and mood of an older Oriental poem—the 'historical' Psalm:

"I will open my mouth in a parable: I will declare hard sentences of old;

Which we have heard and known: and such as our fathers have told us.....

When there were yet but a few of them: and they strangers in the land;

What time as they went from one nation to another: from one kingdom to another people.....

That their posterity might know it: and the children which were yet unborn."

If we want to feel whether the 'Song of Origins' is good poetry or not we must picture the crowded wedding-feast, and the old man reciting the tale of the Custom (with gesture and beat of drum at each cadence of the rhythmical accented verse) to the sons of Menangkabau 'in a strange land': only then can we understand how good the work is, how fitted for its time and place, how full of true pleasure.

I am indebted for suggestions to several friends, in particular to Mr. J. E. Nathan, District Officer of Kuala Pilah, whose inquiries with Negri Sembilan Chiefs have greatly helped the elucidation of some obscure passages in the Malay text.

Teromba.

Malim Kunong Malim Kinang
Singgah di-rumah Bilal Lata :
Makan sireh dengan pinang,
Saya 'nak mulai pangkal kata.

Terbang balam terbang merbah,
Terbang melayap ka-dalam padi :
Memberi salam serta sembah,
Sembah lalu salam kembali.

10. Baju Jakun dari hulu ;
Anak undan di-permatang tebat :
Sembah ampun Dato' Penghulu !
Memberi salam pada nang rapat.

Anak sembilang di-atas langsung ;
Ayer dalam Sungai Landai :
Saya membilang mana nang dapat ;
Nang tinggal sama di-pakai.

20. Bukan lebah sa-barang lebah,
Lebah hinggap dalam chempaka :
Bukan sembah sa-barang sembah,
Sembah saya sembah pesaka.

Bukan lebah sa-barang lebah,
Lebah hinggap di-hujung akar :
Bukan sembah sa-barang sembah,
Dari hujung sampai ka-pangkal.
Sembah, Dato' !

Ada-lah pebilangan adat :
Mengaji kapada alif,
Membilang kapada esa ;
Pebilangan pada nang tua-tua.
30. Perkhabaran pada nang kechil-kechil.

Apa perkhabaran nang kechil-kechil ?
Sa-pertama waktu yang lima,
Kedua hari yang tujuh,
Ketiga bulan yang dua-belas,
Keempat tahun yang 'lapan.

Apa pebilangan nang tua-tua ?
Alam beraja,
Luak berpenghulu,
Sukn bertua,

Translation.

Astrologers and sages twain
Are come to Bilal Lata's door.
Friends, chew the betel nut, and deign
To listen to a tale of yore.

The ground-dove and the nightingale
Above the planted rice are fleeting:
'Homage!' I cry to you, and 'Hail!';
And you, O friends, return my greeting.

10. A country coat of dusky hue!
A eygnet white in reedy nest! ⁽¹⁾
'Homage!', O Chief, I cry to you,
And 'Hail!' to every wedding guest.

Deep, deep, the Landai waters flow!
A stinging fish among the fruit!
I tell the story that I know,
But tales forgotten are not mute.

- The bee no bee of common wing—
The bee upon the *champak* flower!
No common song the song I sing—
A song of legendary power.
- 20.

Goodly the bee, of golden wing,
Alighting on the flowery sprays!
Goodly the ancient song I sing,
A bond with bygone yesterdays.
Homage, O Chief!

- Now the saying of the custom runs:
Spell from the letter A!
Count from the figure I!
Tradition is with the old,
Report is with the young.
- 30.

What is the report of the young?
The Hours that are five, ⁽²⁾
The Days that are seven,
The Months that are twelve,
The Years that are eight. ⁽³⁾

What is the tradition of the old?
For the Realm a Ruler,
For the Province a Chief,
For the Tribe a Head,

The Wedding
Guest recites
a verse of
greeting
to the Chief
of the Bride's
clan.

And a pre-
lude of an-
cient custo-
mary wisdom

40. Anak buah beribu-bapa,
Orang semenda bertempat-semenda;
Galas bersandaran,
Perahu bertambatan,
Dagang bertepatan.

Maka ada pebilangan pula:

- Nau pangkat turun,
Pulai pangkat naik,
Manusia berpangkat-pangkat,
Dari pangkat nang tua sampai pangkat nang kechil,
50. Mengikut-lah pebilangan daripada suku yang empat
telapakan 'lapan.

Sembah, Dato'!

Ada pun pebilangan yang di-pakai itu
Pebilangan yang turun di-Menaungkabau,
Tanah yang bernama

Sa-lilit Pulau Percha,
Sa-lembang Tanah Melayu,
Sa-bingkal tanah terbalek,
Sa-helai akar putus,
Sa-batang kayu rebah.

60. Siapa yang empunya bilangan?
Maharaja Di Raja,
Turun di-Gunong Berapi,
Tempat sialang berlantak besi,
Tempat kemuntong membilang bungkur,
'Tempat penyengat bertimbal jalan.

Sembah, Dato'!

Maka turun-lah Maharaja Di Raja,
Turun ka-Periangan Padang Panjang,

70. Tempat sesap berjeramian,
Tempat tunggul berpemaranan,
Tempat pendam berkuburan,
Hendak mendirikan Istana di-Periangan Padang
Panjang.

Yang jauh berpanggilan,
Yang dekat berimbauan:
Yang jauh sudah datang,
Yang dekat sudah tiba.

Maka bertitah-lah Maharaja Di Raja,
Kapada orang di-dalam Periangan Padang Panjang:

- 'Tepong tawar di-buat,
80. Akar di-tetas,
Kayu di-tetak,
Tanak di-gali!'

40. For the Clan an Elder,
 For the Bridegroom the Kin of the Bride; ⁽⁴⁾
 For the burden a support, ⁽⁵⁾
 For the boat a mooring,
 For the stranger a surety.

And there is another saying:

The sugar-palm grows down to death, ⁽⁶⁾
 The elm grows up to death,
 But man endures in generations,
 From the generation of the old to the generation of
 the young,

50. Obeying the tradition of the Four Tribes and the
 Lesser Eight. ⁽⁷⁾

Homage, O Chief!

Now the tradition that they keep
 Is the tradition that came down in Menangkabau,
 The land that is called

The eircle of the Isle of Sumatra,
 The stretch of Malay Land,
 Wherever a clod of earth is turned.
 Wherever a trail of creeper cut,
 Wherever a tree-trunk felled.

The song
 tells of the
 revelation
 of the Custom
 in Menang-
 kabau.

60. From whom came the tradition?
 From Maharaja Di Raja, ⁽⁸⁾
 Who descended from the Hill of Fire,
 Where the hiving trees are pegged with iron, ⁽⁹⁾
 Where wasps haunt every knotted bole,
 Where hornets guard the path on either hand.

Homage, O Chief!

And Maharaja Di Raja came down,

70. Down to the plain of Padang Panjang,
 A place of stubble and severed scrub, ⁽¹⁰⁾
 A place of stumps and tree-trunks felled,
 A place of graves and upturned earth,
 To build him a Palace there in the plain of Padang
 Panjang.

The far folk were bidden,
 The near folk were called:
 The far folk came,
 The near folk met together.

Then spake Maharaja Di Raja

To the folk of the plain of Padang Panjang:

80. 'Mix ye the magic rice-paste, ⁽¹¹⁾
 Cut ye the creeper,
 Fell ye the tree,
 Delve ye the sod!'

Of the build-
 ing of his
 magic Palace

- Kemudian tepong tawar di-buat di-renjiskan,
 Akar di-tetas di-ikatkan,
 Kayu di-tetak di-tindiskan,
 Tanah di-gali di-timbunkan,
 Istana di-dirikan:
 Istana bernama Tiang Teras Jelatang,
 Bertaboh pulut-pulut,
 Bergendang seleguri.
90. Istana sudah, tukang di-bunoh:
 Tukang tidak mendua kali.
- Di-situ-lah tempat pesaka yang terletak.
 Tempat kebesaran yang terlonggok,
 Tempat tombak yang berhuraian,
 Tempat pedang yang bersampaian.
- Apa pesaka yang terletak?
 Keris bisa Sempana Tempang:
 Menitek sa-titek ka-laut
 100. Menjadi tumpah karam,
 Menitek sa-titek ka-darat
 Menjadi siar bakar.
- Apa kebesaran yang terlonggok?
 Sa-pertama tali pengikat,
 Kedua pedang pemanchong,
 Ketiga besi penindeh,
 Keempat keris penyalang.
- Sembah, Dato'!
- Maka bertitah-lah Maharaja Di Raja,
 110. Suroh menghimpunkan orang
 Isi negeri Periang Padang Panjang.
 Maka berhimpun-lah rayat,
 Yang patah datang bertongkat,
 Yang buta datang berhela,
 Yang pekak datang bertanya:
 Yang baik apa-tah lagi?
 Orang sudah terkampong,
 Raja menobat,
 Penghulu berkerojan.
120. Maka bertitah Raja kepada Penghulu yang dua sila,
 Dato' Perpateh Pinang Sa-batang dan Dato' Temenggong:
 'Bukit sama di-daki,
 Lurah sama di-turuni!
 Gantang sama di-tolok,
 Chupak sama di-pawai,

And straight the magie paste was mixt and sprinkled,
 The creepers were eut and tied,
 The trees were felled and piled,
 The sods were delved and heaped,
 The Palaece was raised:
 The Palaece called ' Pillars of Tree-nettle Trunks ',
 With big drums all of mallow stems,
 And little drums all of star-apple stalks.⁽¹²⁾

90.

The Hall was built, the builder slain.
 The builder shall not build again!⁽¹³⁾

There in the Palace was the royal heirloom set,
 There were the royal emblems stored,
 There were the spears with tasselled knots,
 There were the swords in scabbards hanging.

What was the royal heirloom?

Of the Royal
Kris.

The poisoned kris, the ' Lueky Cripple ':
 One drop of poison shed to sea
 Makes storm and shipwreck,
 One drop of poison shed to land
 Makes fire and conflagration.

100.

What were the royal emblems?

And of the
Royal
Emblems.

The cord to bind,
 The sword to sever,
 The iron to hold,⁽¹⁴⁾
 The kris to slay.

Homage, O Chief!

Then spake the King, Maharaja Di Raja,
 Bade eall together the people,
 The folk of the land of Padang Panjang.
 And straight the people came,
 The halt came on erutches,
 The blind came with a guide,
 The deaf came asking the way:
 Of the hale what need to tell?
 The Folk were met together,
 The King held his state,
 The Chiefs made festival.

How the King
would have
made a dual
dominion for
the two
Chieftains.

110.

120. Then spake the King to the Chieftains twain,
 Dato' Perpatch Pinang Sa-batang and Dato' Temenggong:⁽¹⁵⁾
 ' Together elimb the hill,
 Together deseend the valley!
 Together trim the measure,
 Together test the scales,

- Adat sama di-katakan!
 Bertimbang sama berat,
 Berbahagi sama banyak—
 Gedang sama gedang,
 130. Keehil sama keehil!
 Mendapat sama laba,
 Chiehir sama rugi,
 Mengukur sama tinggi,
 Mengidas sama gedang!
 Berat sama di-tating,
 Ringan sama di-letakkan,
 Dek Penghulu yang dua sila!’

Sembah, Dato’!

- Maka menjawab-lah Penghulu yang dua sila:
 140. ‘Sembah ampun, Tuanku!
 Tutoh dahan meranti,
 Buat bahu kilangan:
 Di-bunoh patek’mati,
 Tuanku juga yang kehilangan!’

Nau sa-batang dua sigai,
 Sa-jinjang dua pelesit,
 Satu negeri dua Penghulu,
 Kepantangan adat dengan pesaka,
 Alamat negri akan gadoh!’

150. Maka bertitah-lah Sultan Maharaja Di Raja:
 ‘Orang ehulas boleh di-umpohkan,
 Orang lambat boleh di-nanti,
 Orang berebut boleh di-bahagikan:
 Orang ta’mahu apa-kan daya?’

Sembah, Dato’!

- Maka lepas daripada itu
 Turun-lah Maharaja Di Raja,
 Membawa Penghulu yang dua sila,
 Turun ka-tempat pembahagian,
 160. Turun ka-laut ka-Bandar Rokan,
 Tempat perahu yang silang-sali,
 Tempat dayong yang lentang-lentong,
 Tempat galah yang legah-legoh:
 Di-situ-lah tempat pembahagian,
 Dato’ Temenggong dengan Dato’ Perpateh—
 Menghilir ka-Kampar Kiri,
 Menghulu ka-Kampar Kanan.

Sembah, Dato’!

130. Together declare the custom!
 Weigh with an equal weight,
 Divide with an equal share—
 If great together great,
 If small together small!
 Profit with equal gain,
 Forfeit with equal loss,
 Mete to an equal height,
 Span to an equal breadth!
 Together bear the heavy load,
 Together lay down the light,
 O ye Chieftains twain!’

Homage, O Chief!

140. Then made answer the Chieftains twain:
 ‘Pardon we crave, O King!
 The loppèd bough, though leaves be shed,
 Will serve to shaft a grinding mill:
 Slay us!—But if thy slaves be dead
 Thine too the irreparable ill!’⁽¹⁶⁾

How they
 would not
 obey his
 decree.

One sugar-palm two climbers,⁽¹⁷⁾
 One master two familiar spirits,
 One land two Chiefs—
 These things are abhorred by custom and tradition,
 A token of strife to come on the land!’

150. Then spake the King, Maharaja Di Raja:
 ‘For the sluggard a task may be set,
 For the laggard we may tarry,
 For the greedy we may divide:
 But what availeth us with the froward?’

And how the
 King divided
 the dominion.

Homage, O Chief!

- And thereupon
 The King Maharaja Di Raja went down,
 Down with the Chieftains twain,
 Down to the place of division,
 Down to the sea at Bandar Rokan,
 160. Where the ships lie moored in criss-cross maze,
 Where the oars creak and groan,
 Where the boat-poles clank and thud:
 There was the place of division
 Of Dato’ Temenggong and Dato’ Perpatch—
 Down stream to Kampar Kiri,
 Up stream to Kampar Kanan.

Homage, O Chief!

Menghilir ka-Kampar Kiri!

170. Tempat ayer yang bergelombang,
 Tempat ombak yang memeehah,
 Tempat pasir yang memuteh,
 Tempat beting yang menyulur,
 Tempat pulau yang menanjong,
 Tempat dagang keluar masok,
 Tempat saudagar berjual-beli:
 Siapa yang empunya?
 Dato' Temenggong Bendahara Kaya.

Maka mengundang-lah dia:

180. Siapa berhutang siapa membayar,
 Siapa salah siapa bertimbang,
 Siapa bunoh siapa kena bunoh,
 Itu-lah adat Dato' Temenggong Bendahara Kaya.

Sembah, Dato'!

Kemudian menghulu ka-Kampar Kanan!

190. Tempat ayer sa-gantang sa-lobok,
 Tempat pasir tambun-menambun,
 Tempat batu hampar-menghampar,
 Tempat akar berjembet daun,
 Tempat kayu bersanggit dahan,
 Tempat tupai turun naik,
 Tempat kera berlompat-lompatan,
 Tempat berok berbuai kaki,
 Tempat si-papas berulang mandi,
 Tempat si-dengkang berulang tidor,
 Tempat enggang terbang lalu,
 Tempat ular tidor berlungkar,
 Tempat musang tidor bergelong,
 Tempat katak berbunyi malam,
 200. Tempat siamang bergegahan,
 Tempat ungka bersayu hati,
 Tempat puntianak berjerit-jeritan,
 Tempat gunung yang tinggi padang yang luas.

Maka di-pandang pula padang yang luas,

- Tampak binatang dua kaki,
 Pandang jauh gagak hitam,
 Tengok dekat bangau puteh,
 Sayap-nya lebar kepak-nya panjang,
 Membuhong tinggi.
 210. Mengelebang menyisir awan,
 Hinggap kayu meranting,
 Mana yang jauh tampak-lah dia.

Down stream to Kampar Kiri!

170. Where the water comes in rolling billows,
Where the waves break white in foam,
Where the beaches glare in the sun,
Where the sand-banks stretch seaward,
Where the long islands lie on the tide,
Where the merchandise goes out and in,
Where the traders sell and buy:
Who was the sovereign there?
Dato' Temenggong Bendahara Kaya.

The song
tells of the
seaward
realm of
Dato' Temenggong.

And there he made this law:

180. The debtor shall quit the debt,
The sinner shall pay the forfeit,
The slayer shall be slain.
That was the Custom of Dato' Temenggong Bendahara Kaya.⁽¹⁸⁾

And of his
Law of
Talion.

Homage, O Chief!

And then,

- Up stream to Kampar Kanan!
A place of pools, a gallon to each,
A place of sandy banks and ledges,
A place of boulders scattered and heaped,
A place of climbing and twining creepers,
190. A place of tangled and chafing boughs;
Where squirrels race and frisk on the trees,
Where monkeys leap from branch to branch,
Where long-armed apes dangle and swing,
Where mouse-deer nig'tly come to bathe,
Where water-voles return to slumber,
Where the hornbill flits and passes by;
A place of snakes sleeping and coiled,
A place of wildcats sleeping curled,
A place of bullfrogs nightly croaking,
200. A place of black apes howling and calling,
A place of gibbons sadly moaning,
A place of birth-ghosts shrieking and wailing,⁽¹⁹⁾
A place of high hills and open glades.

Of the
landward
realm of
Dato' Per-
patch.

And they looked to the open glade,

- And were ware of a two-legged fowl,
Beheld from afar a black crow,
Seen near at hand an egret white,
Broad of wing and long of pinion,
Soaring aloft,
210. Skimming along cloud-high,
Alighting on a leafless tree,
Kenning all things afar.⁽²⁰⁾

And (in the
parable of a
strange fowl
seen therein)
of the Custom that he
made.

Maka pulang-lah negeri itu
 Kapada Dato' Perpatih Pinang Sa-batang.
 Maka mengundang-lah dia :

- Chenchang berpampas,
 Bunoh berbalas—
 Anak di-panggil makan,
 Anak buah di-sorongkan balas ;
 220. Gawar membeli ;
 Kupur tambat :
 Dendang beli darah,
 Diat beli nyawa,
 Upah beli penat :
 Sah salah bertimbang,
 Sah hutang di-bayar,
 Sah piutang di-terima ;
 Sesat ka-hujung jalan—
 Balek ka-pangkal jalan !
 230. Sesat ka-hujung kata—
 Balek ka-pangkal kata !
 Itu-lah adat Dato' Perpatih Pinang Sa-batang.

Sembah, Dato' !

- Maka kemudian daripada itu di-bilang pula,
 Pesaka yang turun dari Pagar Ruyong,
 Turun ka-Periangan Padang Panjang,
 Menghilir sungai tiga laras,
 Sa-pertama Kuantan, kedua Kampar, ketiga Batang
 Ari.
 Rantau berturut dengan undang,
 240. Negeri bertenipek dengan pesaka,
 Kampong berbunyi berketak tangga.
 Raja bertitah di-istana-nya,
 Penghulu mengundang di-balai-nya,
 Lembaga berkata di-telaga-nya.

Sembah, Dato' !

- Maka lepas daripada itu ada pebilangan pula :
 Asal-asal usul-usul,
 Asal jangan di-tinggalkan !
 Bertuan ka-Menangkabau,
 250. Beraja ka-Johor,
 Bertali ka-Siak,
 Berpengkalan ka-Melaka,
 Bermak ka-Naning,
 Berulur-jumbai ka-tanah Jelebu.

And all that land was given
To Dato' Perpatih Pinang Sa-batang.
And there he made this law:

The Law of
Dato' Per-
patih, the
Law of
Reparation.

220.

Whoso wounds shall atone,
Whoso slays shall replace—
Bidding a son to the feast,
Sending a clansman to replace the slain;⁽²¹⁾
Whoso bargains shall buy;
Whoso boasts shall recant;
The blood-price redeems the blood,
The life-price redeems the life,
The hire-price redeems the toil;
If the sin is clear the forfeit is paid,
If the debt is clear the debt is quitted,
If the credit is clear the credit is received;
Astray at the end of the track—

230.

Back to the start of the track!
Astray at the end of the talk—
Back to the start of the talk!⁽²²⁾
That was the Custom of Dato' Perpatih Pinang Sa-
batang.

Homage, O Chief!

And now my tale proceeds,
Of the tradition that came from Pagar Ruyong,
Down to the plain of Padang Panjang,
Down the streams of the three rivers,
Kuantan, Kampar, and Batang Ari:
Each river-reach obeyed its Chief,

240.

The land was at peace, the custom reigned,⁽²³⁾
The hamlets rang with voices, the house-ladders
creaked with tread.
The King gave sentence at the Palace,
The Chief gave judgment at the Hall,
The Headman gave order at the Well.

The song now
tells how the
people
multiplied in
Menang-
kabau.

Homage, O Chief!

And after that there is another saying:

250.

Our sires, our origins,
Forget we not our origins!
Menangkabau our overlord,
Johor our Raja,
Siak our ally,
Malacca our landing-place,
Naning our mother,
The land of Jelebu our offshoot!⁽²⁴⁾

And how
from among
them came
oversea the
folk of the
Negri Sem-
bilan.

Maka di-bilang pula

Dek Penghulu yang empat sila,
 Anak Batin Maha Galang:
 Sa-pertama, Petra Indera Pahlawan,
 Kedua, Lela Perkasa Setiawan,
 Ketiga, Maharaja Lela Sedia Raja,
 Keempat Paduka Alam Penghulu Adil.
 Semujong balai melintang,
 Johol balai bertingkat,
 Jelebu balai balairong,
 Rembau tanah berkerohan,
 Seri Menanti tanah mengandong.

260.

Maka di-bilang pula:

Chenchang tiga chenchang,
 Tingkat tiga tingkat:
 Di-rentang panjang,
 Di-gumpal sengkat.

270.

Chenchang sa-kali chenchang,
 Kerat sa-kali kerat:
 Chenchang-menyenchang,
 Kerat-mengerat.

Sembah, Dato'!

Maka lepas daripada itu di-bilang pula:

Mengkudu lagi bergawar,
 Konon pula ehempedak muda!
 Penghulu lagi bergawa,
 Konon pula saya yang muda!

280.

Buah langsung, kemarau kandis—
 Arak ka-Bentan akan memelihara-nya!
 Gedang kasad saya ka-mari,
 Menengar intan berita-nya.

Bintongan ambilkan tangga,
 Akan tangga Manggawari:
 Junjongan mengimbau saya,
 Menengar intan di-dalam negeri.

290.

Chenchang batang lumai-lumai,
 Akan menuba si-Batang Ari:
 Sunggoh saya di-suak sungai,
 Ada maksud saya ka-mari.

And then the saying tells

Of their
Chiefs.

Of the four Chiefs,
The sons of Batin Maha Galang:
First, Petera Indera Pahlawan,
Second, Lela Perkasa Setiawan,
260. Third, Maharaja Lela Sedia Raja,
Fourth, Paduka Alam Penghulu Adil.⁽²⁵⁾
For Sungai Ujong a hall athwart,
For Johol a hall of tiers,
For Jelebu a hall of assembly,⁽²⁶⁾
Rembau the place of installation,
Sri Menanti the Royal home.

And after that the saying runs:

And of their
tribal polity.

The stroke, the triple stroke,
The court, the triple court:
270. Stretch out the cord—how long!
Roll up the cord—how short!

And the stroke, the single stroke,
The cut, the single cut:
The stroke that divides,
The cut that severs.⁽²⁷⁾

Homage, O Chief!

And now my story runs:

The Wedding
Guest now
hints in
homely verse
the purpose
of his coming.

Even sour plums are watched, we know:
The more, then, ripening jack-fruit green!
280. Even a chief to lords bows low:
The more, then, I so poor and mean!

The damson droops, the berries wither—
Their bloom at Bentan Isle repair!
Faint with desire am I come hither—
Desire to win a jewel rare.

Bintongan took away the stair
And Mangawari mourns in vain:
I come to take a jewel rare—
Thy loss will be my precious gain.

290. Chenchang batang lumai-lumai.
To fish the Batang Ari stream!⁽²⁸⁾
From far I come with weary foot
To seek the jewel of my dream.

Ayam puteh terbang siang,
 Terbang hinggap papan gendeng,
 Berkili-kili gading,
 Mengelebang-ngelebang 'laman yang luas,
 Berseri-seri kampong yang besar,
 Akan gembala rumah yang gedang.

300. Ayam hitam terbang malam,
 Hinggap di-rumpun pandan,
 Kukut-nya ada tampak-nya tidak.

Kain puteh sa-belit,
 Sa-belit di-buat pengikat timba:
 Chelaka tanjong berbelit,
 Belum di-chari sudah tersua.

Sembah, Dato'!

Maka lepas daripada itu di-sebut pula bilangan
 Dek suku yang empat telapakan 'lapan:
 310 Sa-pertama tali berwaris,
 Kedua tali pesaka,
 Ketiga tali bersemendaan:
 Tali berwaris ta'boleh putus,
 Tali pesaka ta'boleh di-ubah,
 Tali bersemenda ta'boleh chachat.

Maka lepas daripada itu
 Adat tidak menggalang,
 Hukum tidak menghambat,
 Harns bersemenda bersemendaan,
 320. Chachat jangan chedera jangan.
 Janji di-laboh di-muliai,
 Janji sampai di-tepati:
 Maka ini-lah saya datang,
 Laksana sikat kurang pendapat,
 Laksana jalan kurang pasar,
 Saya datang menepati janji,
 Mengisi adat,
 Serta anak buah.

Habis kata.

330. Sembah, Dato'!

A white fowl flies by day,
Flies and alights on the gable edge,
With anklets of ivory,
Flitting about a spacious court,
The pride of a wide demesne,
Fit queen for a goodly house!

The worth of
the Bride.

300. A black fowl flies by night,
And alights on the screw-pine clump,
His croak is heard, but he is not seen.

And the un-
worthiness of
the Bride-
groom.

A single twist of linen white
Will serve to make a bucket-string:
Unsought they met their troth to plight—
Curse on the stream meandering! (29)

Homage, O Chief!

And after that is said this saying
Of the Four Tribes and the Lesser Eight:

310. First the tie of the kin,
Second the tie of the custom,
Third the tie of the wedlock:
The tie of the kin may not be severed,
The tie of the custom may not be changed,
The tie of the wedlock may not be marred.

The Wedding
Guest now
recites the
Marriage
Custom.

And so it was, that

320. Custom set no bar,
Religion set no ban,
To this marrying and giving in marriage,
Without blemish and without stain.
A bond was made and proclaimed,
A bond due is fulfilled:
And therefore come I now,
Like a harrow that harrows amiss,
Like a street of little traffic,
I come to fulfil the bond,
I pay the bride-price,
I bring the bridegroom my kinsman. (30)

And tells of
the making
of the mar-
riage bond to
fulfil which
he (all un-
worthy) is
now come.

My tale is told.

330. Homage, O Chief!

Notes.

1. *Lines 9-10.* There may be a hidden reference to the 'dark' bridegroom and the 'fair' bride: compare lines 294-302.
2. *Line 32.* The Muhammadan hours of prayer.
3. *Line 35.* The cycle of eight Muhammadan years (and the method of computing it) is described in *The Achehnese*, Vol. 1, page 197.
4. *Line 41.* Under Menangkabau exogamous custom the bridegroom on marriage enters into the tribe of the bride, is subject to her family, lives in her house, and tills her fields. On divorce the children of the marriage remain with her, the husband removes his personal property, joint earnings or debts are divided.

See Naning Proverbs (Journal No. 67), and A Naning Wedding-speech (Journal No. 72).

5. *Lines 42-44.* The meaning is: a stranger entering a Menangkabau country or colony must attach himself definitely to some clan that will 'support' him by going surety for his debts and provide a 'mooring' where he may be found. Only then can he be accepted in marriage by another exogamous clan. Without such ties he is called 'a stroller' or 'a drifter' (*dagang wayang, dagang hanyut*).
6. *Lines 46-48.* These lines (of which there are several versions) are very difficult. Mr. I. H. Burkill, Director of Gardens, S. S., has in reply to inquiries sent me the following note which supports the translation given:

"The *Nau*, or *Kabong* (*Arenga saccharifera*), certainly dies downwards. It does not flower until it is aged and then it sends out bunch after bunch of flowers from dormant buds, commencing at the top and exhausting itself with the lowest.

The *Pulai* (*Alstonia scholaris*), like most forest trees, when it dies...dies first at the top."

Mr. A. Caldecott in his *Jelevu Sayings* (Journal No. 78) gives:

*Pulai nan pangkat naik,
Manusia berpangkat turun,*

and translates,

*The pulai tree broadens as it goes up,
Family trees as they descend.*

A similar text is given in *Kitab Kiliran Budi*, No. 627; both readings seem defective.

7. *Line 50.* Of the original twelve tribes only four are now known in Naning—the Seri Melenggang, Tiga Batu, Mungkal, and Anak Melaka; but each has many exogamous sub-eldans in many different Mukims. Their heads were known as the ‘Pillars of the Hall’ of the Dato’ Naning (*Tiang Balai*); the word *telapakan* appears to mean the outer platform that surrounds the *Balai* slightly below the level of its floor.

A full description of the twelve tribes in Rembau is given by Parr and Mackray in Rembau (Journal No. 56); see also Notes on the Negri Sembilan, Part 2, in Papers on Malay Subjects (F. M. S. Government Press).

8. *Line 61.* Maharaja Di Raja was the mythical Sultan of Menangkabau who—according to Naning tradition—divided the empire of the world with his two brothers Maharaja Depang (Emperor of China) and Maharaja Alif (Emperor of Rome and Byzantium). All three (according to the same tradition) were sons of Alexander the Great; who was himself the ninety-first and last child of Father Adam, and—the ninety elder offspring having been paired off in Ptolemaic fashion—was provided (on the special intercession of the Prophet Muhammad) with a heaven-sent wife known as Tuan Puteri Siti Kayangan.

Newbold gives a somewhat similar tradition. All the Peninsular Sultans claim descent from Alexander the Great through the Sassanidae; the mythical ancestry of the Negri Sembilan Rulers is given in Seri Menanti (Papers on Malay Subjects, F. M. S.).

9. *Line 63.* This line might be translated—‘where swarming bees have stings of steel’, and this would agree in sense with the two following lines; but the translation in the text is most probably correct. Trees where bees regularly hive are in some places considered a perquisite of the Raja, and pegs (*pating*) are hammered into the trunk to facilitate climbing. So too *durian* trees in the jungle: a line frequently found with the line in the text is—

Tempat durian di-takok Raja,

Where the *durian* trees are notched by the Raja.

The three lines 63 to 65 convey the idea of forbidden Royal ground (*tanah larangan Raja*).

10. *Lines 69-71.* These three lines are now a proverbial expression for the three stages of Menangkabau jurisdiction. They are clearly out of place in this context.

The word *sesap* means (like the more common word *tebas*), ‘to fell small scrub, clear undergrowth’. *Berpemaranasan* refers not to the levelling of earth, but to the cut ends of the severed trunk and the stump.

The lines are a noted crux and have received many translations, none of them very satisfactory. Mr. J. E. Nathan informs me that the three lines mean in Negri Sembilan the *Lembaga*, the *Undang*, and the *Raja* respectively (the Tribal Head, the Chief, and the Ruler, lines 37-39 above); but no Malay can explain how they came to get this secondary meaning.

I suggest that the connection is as follows: the three lines describe three stages of clearing and preparing land for a grave, viz., cutting down the scrub (*tebas*), felling the trees (*tebang*), digging the pit (*pendam*); and so, metaphorically, the graded jurisdictions of the Tribal Head, Chief, and Ruler. They might be paraphrased:

‘Where scrub has been cut, stubble is found;
Where stumps remain, trees have been felled:
Only where a pit has been dug is a grave made’.

In other words, the jurisdictions of the *Lembaga* and *Undang* are limited, and their decisions are not final (‘stubble’ or ‘stumps’ are left): it is the *Raja* who is the ultimate fountain of justice (*keadilan*) and the final court of appeal.

See also note on lines 268-275, below.

As to the respective jurisdictions of the three Courts, see Rembau, chapter 2 (Journal No. 56), and Notes on the Negri Sembilan, Part 2.

11. *Line 79.* For the use of ceremonial rice-paste and Malay building ceremonies see Malay Magic (Skeat).
12. *Lines 88-90.* The magic Palace of Pagar Ruyong—one of the royal marvels (*kebesaran*) of the Sultans of Menangkabau. The miracle was the supernatural size of the nettle, mallow, and star-apple, that could furnish pillars and drums. The drums were covered with the ‘skin of lice’ (*kulit tuma*).

The Menangkabau Regalia included (among other childish prodigies) ‘the diadem of the Prophet Solomon; the mountain where grow the plaintive bamboos which entrap wild birds by the fascination of their melody; the elephant Sakti; the *padi*, Sitanjo Bani, on which His Majesty feeds at mid-day; the flower Seri, the odour of which extends a day’s journey—it is sown, grows up, produces leaves, flowers and fruit, in a single day’; and many other strange and curious things. A list of the Regalia is given in Newbold, who translates from a Malay document. See also a footnote on page 28 of Malay Magic.

The Malay text from which Newbold translates will be found in Volume 921 of the Society’s Library in Singapore, a very interesting work.

A curious corruption of line 89 may be found incorporated in a charm addressed to the Demon Sungkai (Malay Magic, page 105):

Bertaborkan batang purut-purut,

translated 'Strewn over with the stems of *purut-purut*'—whatever that may mean!

13. *Lines 91-92.* It has been suggested that the 'killing' of the architect does not seem a Malay idea—and that *bunoh* here means only that he was prohibited from practising his art. That is a possible translation of *bunoh*; but (apart from the fact that most Malay romance is borrowed from the Hindu), I think the meaning here is the primary one of kill. There is a parallel in the story of Awang Sulong Merah Muda: a tooth-filer is hired for him at a fee of \$28 and then killed

(Sa-hari sudah tukang di-bunoh,

Jangan tertiru di-Měngkasar),

shrouded, buried, and feasted over for seven days. And in the story of Anggun Che' Tunggal, for the building of the hero's ship—

Tiga-puloh di-bunoh tukang

Baharu di-ambil tukang bongkok

(Dr. Winstedt translates:

'Thirty craftsmen slain, they summoned
Hunch-back exile from Macassar.')

14. *Line 106.* *Besi penindeh* seems to mean the iron prong used to 'hold' an *amok* runner.

But it might also mean iron weights used for torture, similar to the *peine forte et dure*, a form of torture that was legal in England until the reign of George III.

Lines 104-107 are out of their context: the 'cord' belonged to the *Lembaga*, the 'kris' to the *Undang*, and the 'sword' to the *Raja*. See *Rembau*, page 104, and *Notes on the Negri Sembilan*, pages 40-42.

15. *Lines 120-121.* The 'Chieftains Twain' are the famous lawgivers of Malay myth.

Newbold says: "The lawgivers, Kai Tumungong and Perpati Sabatang, were brothers, and pretended, by Mohammedan writers, to have been among the forty persons who went with Noah into the ark. Some say that Perpati was no other than Japhet: others, with more plausibility, affirm that Perpati is a corruption of the Hindoo Prajapati, signifying Lord of creatures; and that the two brothers were ministers of one of the Hindoo sovereigns of Menangkabau, who reigned long before the introduction of Islam.

The Javanese, however, claim the names Perpati and Tumungong as appertaining to two high officers still extant in that country, viz. Pati, a minister, and Tumungong, an inferior sort of ruler and magistrate. The latter of these titles is in common use in Malayan countries; for instance, the Tumungong of Johore."

The word *sila* is used as a numeral coefficient for Chieftains—an interesting use not, I think, recorded in dictionaries.

16. *Lines 141-144.* This *pantun* seems to be a commonplace for deprecation of a Raja's wrath; it is used by the midwives in the Hikayat of Awang Sulong Merah Muda (Malay Literature Series, No. 5).
17. *Line 145.* The 'climber' (*sigai*) is a bamboo pole by which the tapper climbs to tap the blossom of the palm (*mayang*) for the sugar-juice; two poles to one tree imply either a thief or a disputed claim: in Naning the line is a proverb for a lady with a lover as well as a husband. (See Malay Proverbs, 42, in Journal No. 67).
18. *Lines 180-183.* For a discussion of the *Adat Temenggong* see Papers on Malay Subjects, Law, Introductory Sketch (Wilkinson). Mr. Wilkinson considers that the *Adat Temenggong* is simply the *Adat Perpateh*—the true law of the Malays—in a state of disintegration after exposure to the influence of Hindu despotism and Moslem Law, and administered on autocratic lines.

The *Adat Temenggong* is, in fact, the law of a sea-faring mercantile community; the *Adat Perpateh* is the democratic Custom of an inland folk away from foreign intercourse. Hence the well known proverb

Bodoh Menangkabau yang tiada menumpoh laut
(Stupid the Menangkabau folk that have no footing
on the sea)

—a proverb very pleasantly illustrated by a Rabelaisian dialogue in Tjakap-tjakap Rampai-rampai (Batavia, 1868).

19. *Lines 186-202.* These lines, describing Malay forest where the upper waters of a river narrow to rapids, are one of the most famous passages in Malay literature; fragments appear in many forms in many Hikayat.
20. *Lines 205-212.* The strange fowl, observing everything and visible to all, is a symbol of the mild democratic *Adat Perpateh*, impartial, even-handed, and understood of every peasant.
21. *Lines 217-219.* The principle of reparation and restitution under the *Adat Perpateh* extended even to crimes of homicide. See Rembau, page 27:

'Death is regarded by the Custom as a diminution of tribal wealth. Hence in the case of murder an equivalent return was exacted from the murderer's tribe: not the death

of the murderer but the transfer of the slayer's blood-relation to the tribe of the slain. The murderer cannot make the substitution in person—his *tribe* must make good the damage inflicted. Hence his son—who (under the exogamic custom) cannot be a member of his father's tribe—is exempt, and his nephew suffers vicariously'.

On the *Adat Perpatih* principles of compensation and restitution see Rembau *passim*, and Papers on Malay Subjects, Law, Introductory Sketch.

22. *Lines 228-231.* These lines are a moral for judges—let inquiry be cautious and thorough. The metaphor is of a wriggling lizard (*biawak bengkong*), climbing slowly from the base to the top of a tree—a type for the cautious seeker after truth, not ashamed to retrace his steps when the line of inquiry has proved wrong.

See Malay Proverbs, 73, Journal No. 67.

23. *Line 240.* *Bertempek* is probably a phonetic form of *bertepat*, and has been translated accordingly.
24. *Lines 250-254.* The influence of Johor over the Menangkabau colonies of the Negri Sembilan probably dates from their foundation; it became weak after the installation of Raja Melewar as the first Sovereign of Negri Sembilan in 1773, and (in spite of some attempts by the late Sultan Abubakar to revive it) is now extinct.

The references to Johor and Siak have been usually explained (Rembau, page 101; Sri Menanti, pages 12 and 13) in relation to the appointment of the first Yam Tuan (Raja Melewar) in 1773; but the expression '*Johor our Raja*' seems inconsistent with this explanation.

Mr. Wilkinson refers the lines

*Malacca our landing-place,
Naning our mother*

to the same historical event. It is much more probable that the lines were in existence before that date and refer to the founding of the Negri Sembilan colonies in the 15th and 16th centuries.

25. *Lines 258-261.* These are the hereditary titles of the Chiefs (*Undang*) of Sungai Ujong, Johol, Rembau, and Jelebu.
26. *Lines 262-264.* The pavilions erected at Sri Menanti for the four *Undang* (of Sungai Ujong, Johol, Jelebu, and Rembau), when they come there for the installation of a Yam Tuan or for a periodical audience, are each of special design and position. See Journal No. 19, page 50; Negri Sembilan Government Gazette, August 1898; and Sri Menanti, section XII.

The Sungai Ujong pavilion is built at right angles (*melintang*) to the pavilion of audience (*balai pengadapan*). The

significance of this position is variously explained: probably the suggestion is that the Dato' Klana can bar innovations by the Raja.

The Johol pavilion is built with a tier. No one can explain this feature—not even the present Dato' Johol, whom Mr. Nathan consulted. It is thought by some to be connected with the tradition that the first Dato' Johol was a woman, whose *balai* was built with a raised floor screened by a curtain. I think this is probably correct. The shrine of the famous Kramat Hidup of Sungai Baru, Alor Gajah, was built in this fashion. When I visited her in 1908, the Kramat, a very handsome girl, was seated in her shrine within a yellow mosquito curtain, but emerged later to give me curry and tea.

Jelevu balai balairong—a 'hall of assembly'; another reading is *balai berlorong*, which gives no satisfactory sense.

The pavilion is actually a *balai serong*, 'a hall aslant', built at an angle to the Johol and Rembau pavilions. No good explanation has yet been given.

Rembau tanah berkerajan. *Berkerajan* is probably a phonetic corruption of *berkerjaan*, and the reference seems to be to the installation of Raja Melewar at Penajis in Rembau, in 1773.

27. *Lines 268-275*. This rather cryptic passage seems to contrast the long drawn out litigation of contentious persons (through the Courts of the Lembaga, Undang, and Raja) with the Menangkabau ideal of a quick and peaceful settlement by compromise.

See Malay Proverbs 51-89, in Journal No. 67, referred to above. The ideal is summed up in the following proverb:

*Menang berkechundang,
Alah berketundukan,
Sa-rayu berjabat tangan.*

Victory—a defeated foe;
Defeat—a bowed head;
Agreement—a joining of hands.

The point is: even successful litigation is unsatisfactory—it leaves an embittered foe.

28. *Lines 290-291*. In *tuba* fishing the juice of the pounded *tuba* root is poured into the river far upstream; the fish to escape the stupefying juice flee downstream and are stopped by a barricade and speared. A delightful account of a Tuba-fishing is given in Mr. W. G. Maxwell's book "In Malay Forests".

The connection between the two halves of this verse lies in the suggestion of the bridegroom coming from far upriver to win a bride downstream.

29. *Lines 303-306.* The sense of this verse is probably a *risqué* suggestion that the bride and bridegroom have already met together, while the old man, the speaker, was delayed by his winding (imaginary) journey downstream.
30. *Lines 310-328.* A fuller account of the *adat* of Naning marriage is given in my paper 'A Naning Wedding-speech', in *Journal* No. 72.

A Note on the *Pantun* and the prosody of the *Teromba*.

The quatrains of the prelude and peroration are rough and rather bucolic verse, poor specimens of the *Pantun* art. They may be well compared with the very similar quatrains used at an Acheh wedding, and quoted by Snouek Hurgronje⁽¹⁾ with the following words:

The *Pantun*.

'.....the first two lines are not in any way connected in point of sense with the second pair but serve chiefly to supply rhyming words.'

This criticism is now hardly acceptable; and it seems possible without very strained interpretation to trace something more than mere assonance in the structure of most of the *Pantun* in the text. An attempt has been made in translation to bring out what element of sense-connection could be discovered in the couplets, but lost topical or local allusions (in lines 1 and 2, or 286 and 287, for example) make it impossible to recover the full intention of their author.

Marsden in dealing with Malay versification⁽²⁾ recognised only two forms—the *shaer* and the *pantun*, and remarked: "*Rhyme is an essential part of Malay metrical composition, blank verse being unknown to the Malays*". This judgment takes no account of such compositions as the present *Teromba*, or of the metrical passages that occur in romances like *Awang Sulong Merah Muda* or *Malim Deman*. The truth is, as Mr. Wilkinson has noticed, that 'much Malay prose-literature is in a transition stage'; it contains metrical and, occasionally, rhyming passages; it was composed not for reading but for recitation by a rhapsodist; and its appeal was to the ear and not to the eye.

The prosody
of the
Teromba.

The language of the *Teromba* is clearly metrical (in the sense of 'measured') throughout, and analysis shows the essential principle of the verse to be the recurrence in the lines of a regular number of stressed or accented syllables. The number varies—according to the length of the lines—from two to four. For example in the lines

(1) *The Achehnese*, Vol. 1, page 312.

(2) *A Grammar of the Malayan Language*, page 126.

Sa-lilit Pulau Pércha

Sa-lémbang Tanah Meláyu

there are two accented syllables in each line; in the lines

Témpat sésap berjerámian,

Témpat túnggul berpemárasan

there are three; and there are four in the lines

Témpat siálang berlántak besí,

Témpat kemúntong membílang búngkur.

I noticed in Ungkai Lisut's recitation of the verses that the accented syllables were strongly emphasized and that a distinct caesura was made in each line (in the lines containing three or four accented syllables it occurred after the word containing the second). The effect produced was a rhythmic recitative, slightly reminiscent of an intoned Psalm. In the lines with four beats it was observable that the second and fourth were much more emphatic than the first and third, and in the lines with three beats that the second and third were much more emphatic than the first. Further examination of the verses shows that in each case the most important words in the sentence are so placed that the accentual beat falls inevitably upon them, and they are lengthened in pronunciation, or pronounced with greater force, by a natural union of sense and rhythm.

It would, perhaps, be true to say that it is whole words (or word-roots), rather than syllables, that are accented, and that in each line—whatever its length—there are two key-words that both give its meaning and sustain the principal accentual beats.

For example, in the specimen lines already quoted

Témpat sesap berjeramian,

Témpat tunggul berpemarasan

Témpat sialang berlantak besi,

Témpat kemuntong membílang búngkur,

it is the eight underlined words

.....*clearing*.....*stubble*.....

.....*stumps*.....*severing*.....

.....*hiving-trees*.....*iron*.....

.....*wasps*.....*nodes*.....

that are chiefly stressed in recitation, just as it is these words that convey—in the elliptical or 'telegraphic' Malay idiom—the essential meaning of the lines. The metrical system is, in fact, bound up with the two main principles of Malay composition, balance and antithesis, on which a most interesting note will be found in Dr. Winstedt's Malay Grammar.

There is little doubt, I think, that this composition (like the metrical passages in Malay romances such as *Seri Rama* or *Malim Deman*) was originally intended for singing or recitative, with a beat of the drum (*rebana*), as in *pantun* singing, to mark each accented word.

In lines with four beats, such as
*Turun ka-laut ka-Bandar Rokan,*
Tempat perahu yang silang-sali,
Tempat dayong yang lentang-lentong....

there is observable a certain superficial resemblance to the four-foot trochaic metre, most familiar in the song of Hiawatha—

....*Shē wās thinking of ā hūntēr,*
Yoōng ānd tāll, ānd vēry hāndsōme,
Whō ōne mōrning in thē Spring-tīme
Cāme tō būy hēr fāthēr's ārrōws....

and the resemblance has led translators to adopt this rather monotonous metre for their versions of Malay metrical romances and *Teromba*. It is, however, clear that the Malay verse is not 'metrical' (in the sense of resolvable into 'feet' that scan), but accental. As such it may be compared with an only slightly less primitive form of composition—the old English accented and alliterative verse, such as *Beowulf*:

....*Wāllowing wāters, coldest of weāthers,*
Night wāning wān, while wīnd from the North,
Bāttle-grim blēw on us; rough were the billows....

or *Piers Plowman*:

....*Déeth can dryvynge after, and al to dúste passhed*
Kynges and kynghtes, káysers and popes,
Manye a lóvely ládye and lémnuans of knyghtes
Swórned and swélted for sórwe of hise dyntes.

Apart from the alliterative principle, and the far greater majesty of the English verse, there is a similarity of rhythm in the two forms. Just as the emphatic words in the Malay lines are marked by beat of the *rebana*, so were the accented and alliterated syllables of the English verses marked by a stroke of the harp. And it may be remarked in passing that although the Malay verse is primarily accental there are evident traces in it of both the intermediate ornaments between *vers libres* and perfect rhyme, viz. assonance and alliteration. Both may be seen in the lines already quoted:

Tempat sialang berlantak besi,
Tempat kemuntong membilang bungkur.

The whole system of Malay prosody—including *pantun* structure—deserves more examination than it has yet received. The *Jelebu Sayings*, recorded by Mr. A. Caldecott in *Journal* No. 78, are particularly worthy of close study in this respect; so too are the metrical passages interpolated by Raja Haji Yahya ('an incorrigible rhymester,' as Dr. Winstedt calls him) in the various *Hikayat* edited by Dr. Winstedt and published in the *Malay Literature Series*.

Trengganu.

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